NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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WAYNE COREY/BANGKOK

SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER TO CHINA

ANNCR:

SINGAPORE'S PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW IS ABOUT TO MAKE HIS FIRST VISIT TO THE PEOPLE REPUBLIC OF CHINA. MISTER LEE WILL BE THE FIRST CHINESE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT TO GO TO PEKING SO THE TRIP IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT. WAYNE COREY HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM OUR SOUTHEAST ASIAN BUREAU.

VOICE:

PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW LEAVES SINGAPORE ON MONDAY FOR A VISIT TO PEKING THAT MAY NOT RESULT IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CHINA BUT IS IMPORTANT FOR OTHER REASONS. SINGAPORE ALREADY HAS DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE SMALL ISLAND REPUBLIC OF NEARLY TWO AND A HALF MILLION PEOPLE, MOSTLY CHINESE, IS PEKING'S BIGGEST TRADE PARTNER IS SOUTHEAST ASIA.

MISTER LEE HAS SAID REPEATEDLY THAT SINGAPORE WILL BE THE LAST MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS TO HAVE DIPLOMATIC LINKS WITH CHINA. THREE OF THE FOUR OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES -- THAILAND, MALAYSIA, AND THE PHILLIPINES -- NOW HAVE FORMAL TIES WITH PEKING. AND INDONESIA APPEARS TO BE CAREFULLY TESTING THE POLITICAL WATERS AT HOME BEFORE IT DECIDES WHETHER TO RESTORE THE TIES BETWEEN JAKARTA AND PEKING THAT WERE SUSPENDED ELEVEN YEARS AGO AFTER THE ABORTIVE INDONESIAN COMMUNIST PARTY COUP.

SINGAPORE'S NEED TO ESTABLISH A BALANCE IN ITS RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW AND PEKING IS CONSIDERED MORE IMPORTANT NOW

BECAUSE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE INFLUENCE IN INDOCHINA, WHICH IS SEEN AS ALSO REFLECTING INCREASED SOVIET INFLUENCE THERE. AT THE SAME TIME, SINGAPORE IS KEENLY SENSITIVE TO DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND ALSO SUPPORTS THE CONTINUED U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

WHEN FOREIGN MINISTER SINNATHAMBY RAJARATNAM VISITED MOSCOW LAST MONTH SOME OBSERVERS THOUGHT THEY DETECTED A MAJOR PRO SOVIET SWING AMONG SINGAPORE'S LEADERS. BUT IN FACT THE VISIT MAY HAVE BEEN INTENDED AS A DIPLOMATIC COURTESY CALL INTENDED TO SHOW SINGAPORE'S CONTINUED DESIRE FOR A BALANCE OF POWER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WHICH LEE KUAN YEW CONSIDERS ESSENTIAL TO PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE REGION.

JS/PY